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# Noticias y Notas

News and notes from the Second Judicial District Court

## The heart of the court, aka the Clerk's Office, weathers the stress of the public health crisis

If the Second Judicial Court could be compared to a human body, the Clerk's Office would be its heart. This office receives and processes filings for every court division—Civil, Criminal, Family and Children's. It then pumps out the information—such as hearing dates and times, assigned judges and courtrooms—that all parties need to move the case forward.

Also like a human heart, if the Clerk's Office stopped working, the rest of the body—in this case the court—could no longer function.



**The Juvenile Justice Center's Division of the Clerk's Office has adjusted its work processes to accommodate COVID-19 safety protocols. The JJC Clerk Office staff from left to right is Virginia Mora, Cassandra Cruz, Corina Plata, Michele Braggalla Wynn, Tony Lucero, Jovanna Gonzales, James Padilla and Carla Garcia. Not pictured is Belinda Aylward, who is teleworking.**

The Clerk's Office slowed down in March and April, but only because the number of cases filed dropped significantly as the entire legal system tried to figure out how to operate safely in the midst of a global pandemic.

By July, case filings had returned to near pre-pandemic levels, and the Clerk's Office was once again fully functioning. While some new operating procedures dictated by COVID-19 safety protocols have presented some challenges, the office has continued providing outstanding service.

"The biggest challenge has been preparing our workforce for teleworking. About 50% of our staff started teleworking at the onset of COVID," said Monica Baca, the Court's Deputy Executive Officer for the Clerk's Division. The teleworking was done in rotating shifts so that at least half of the staff has always been present in the courthouse, ready to serve the public.

"The other big change was accepting a lot of our pleadings via email rather than in-person at the counter," Monica said. [For the rest of the story, click here.](#)



## Shout outs



**This is the space where we sound the horn for outstanding performances.**

This week's shout out goes to **Elissa Torres**, who staffs the Court's Information Desk, taking questions from members of the public both in-person and over the telephone. It's a tough job during normal times, but the public health emergency has made it even more so, as Elissa has to keep up with changing processes throughout the court to be able to give the public accurate information. She is on the frontlines dealing with the public, and she does it all with a smile.

**Thank You, Elissa!**

## Excellence in Public Service

Luke Tessman clearly understands that working at the counter in the Court Clerk's Office is, first and foremost, a public service position.

In his roughly nine months staffing the Civil Division window, multiple people have felt compelled to contact Luke's supervisor to express their gratitude for the patient manner in which Luke helped them resolve what, for them, were complex problems.



**Luke Tessman has mastered the art of customer service.**

The most recent incident happened just last week, when a gentleman who recently filed a Notice of Appeal in a civil case called to say, "Luke really went the extra mile and I just wanted you to know how grateful I am because it has been stressful. I also wanted to let you know how grateful I am because these are probably calls you don't get too often."

This follows an incident in July in which Luke helped a woman understand how to fill out paperwork for her case after she had trouble understanding how to do it herself.

This situation really illustrates Luke's willingness to help anyone who approaches his window, since the woman's case was a domestic relations matter and not a civil case. Despite that fact, Luke assisted this citizen multiple times over a three-day period until she had the proper paperwork to move her case forward.

Luke says he always tries to remember that the people who approach his window are dealing with situations that

are unfamiliar to them, and his job is to explain the process to them in words they can understand.

He said the woman he helped with the domestic relations paperwork also needed the in-person contact that she was not able to get when trying to solve her problem over the phone. "I just rephrased the questions that were on the form for her, and she was able to understand what she needed to put on the form," he said.

Luke believes his previous experience in sales helps him to determine the best approach to take when helping people.

The people he encounters at the window are not the only ones who appreciate his efforts. Luke's supervisor, DyAnna Garcia, is appreciative as well.

"Thank you Luke for being such an amazing customer service representative, on top of being an amazing employee," she wrote in a note to Luke after receiving a call from a member of the public. "The Civil Division is lucky to have you. Keep up the great work!"

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## X-FILES team performs vital function behind the scenes

In today's world, we tend to think all documents are readily available in electronic form, but that is not always the case. And when that proves true in the Second Judicial District Court, the X-FILES team comes to the rescue. This group of team players is highly organized and efficient in providing critical support to the entire court.

Whenever someone needs a file that is not in the Odyssey system, this group is called on to locate the paper copy, scan it, make sure it transferred properly, load the file into system and then prepare the paper file for destruction. They also perform this function for new pleadings filed in paper form.

During the pandemic, two of the four members of this team were assigned to telework. That meant the other two, Michael Garley and Joshua Wells, have handled the bulk of the record pulling and scanning duties.

"This group was impacted the same as the other divisions of the Clerk's Office," Deputy CEO Monica Baca said. "They deserve to be thanked and appreciated."

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